

A Brief History of the Burgess Family

by Rev Daniel J. Moore,
grandson of Dorothy Alberta Burgess
1902-1988.



Dorothy Burgess in 1922.

Our line of the Burgess family can trace it's roots all the way back to the Pilgrims who came to America aboard the *Mayflower*. But our family line almost came to an end before it even began.

The *Mayflower* log entry dated "Sunday, Sept 23/Oct 3" recalls the following incident that occurred during a terrible storm at sea: "In sundry of these storms the winds were so fierce, and the seas so high, as they could not bear a knot of sail, but were forced to hull, for divers days together. And in one of them, as they thus lay at hull, in a mighty storm, a lusty young man (called John Howland)

coming upon some occasion above the gratings, was, with a seele of the ship thrown into the sea; but it pleased God that he caught hold of the topsail halyards, which hung overboard, and ran out at length; yet he held his hold (though he was sundry fathoms under water) till he was hauled up by the same rope to the brim of the water, and then with a boat hook and other means got into the ship again, and his life saved; and though he was something ill with it, yet he lived many years after, and became a profitable member both in church and commonwealth.”¹ (“This accident to Howland is said, traditionally, to have happened about the first of October.”²)

We are descendants of this John Howland - the thirteenth signer of the Mayflower Compact. That means we are also related to other John Howland descendants, including U.S. presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt, George H. W. Bush, and George W. Bush (as well as Florida governor Jeb Bush); poets Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow; Mormon founder Joseph Smith, Jr.; actor/actresses Humphrey Bogart, Alec Baldwin (as well as the other three “Baldwin Brothers”), Maude Adams, and

¹ Ames, Azel. *The May-flower and Her Log, July 15, 1620 - May 6, 1621*, 1901, pgs 248-249. (I believe that Ames is quoting William Bradford’s *History Of Plymouth Plantation*.)

² Ames, Azel. *The May-flower and Her Log, July 15, 1620 - May 6, 1621*, 1901, footnote.

Lillian Russell; first lady Edith Roosevelt (wife of Theodore Roosevelt); Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr.; and Phillips Brooks, who wrote “O Little Town of Bethlehem”.³

John Howland was born in 1592 to Henry and Margaret Howland of Fenstanton (nine miles northeast of Cambridge), England and died on February 22, 1672. He was buried at Plymouth, Massachusetts in an unmarked grave, although a marker bearing his name can be found on Burial Hill. (The Pilgrim John Howland Society website says that the current monument was “erected in 1897 with funds raised by Mrs. Joseph Howland. This replaces a stone erected about 1836 by John and Henry Howland of Providence, Rhode Island. The earlier stone was buried under the new one.”)

The Plymouth Colony records state: “The 23th of February Mr. John Howland Senir of the Towne of Plymouth Deceased ... Hee lived until hee attained about eighty yeaes in the world ... and was the last man that was left of those that Came over in the ship Called the May

³ http://www.pilgrimjohnhowlandsociety.org/john_howland_noteable_descendants.shtml

flower, that lived in Plymouth hee was with honor Interred att the Towne of Plymouth on the 25 of February 1672.”⁴

According to his entry in *Colonial Families of the United States of America*, John Howland “came from Essex England; Queen Elizabeth granted the Howlands their Coat Armor in 1584, the family beginning with Bishop Howland, who performed the obsequies [funeral rites] for Mary Queen of Scots; on the voyage to America during a mighty storm John Howland was thrown into the sea but grasping the topsail haillards that were thrown out to him by his friends he was safely drawn on board the vessel; he was the last surviving passenger who [died] in Plymouth; took part in the ‘First Encounter’ Great Meadow Creek, December 1620; governor’s Assistant, 1633-35; in command of the Kennebec Trading Post, 1634, Deputy to General Court, 1641, et seq; [married] 1623, Elizabeth Tilley, [born] circa 1609, in Holland, [died] 12th December, 1687, in Swanzey, age 80, [daughter] of John Tilley, one of the *Mayflower* Pilgrims.”⁵

John Howland appears to have been a servant, or some would say an employee, of Deacon John Carver, another *Mayflower*

⁴ http://www.pilgrimjohnhowlandsociety.org/john_howland.shtml

⁵ Mackenzie, Georhe N. *Colonial Families of the United States of America*. 7 vols. Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1966, Vol. 4, pg 221.

passenger and the first signer of the Mayflower Compact. (Carver and Howland may have been kinsman.⁶)

I should mention that fairly early in the days of the Plymouth Colony (1655 and again in 1662 to be specific) the Friends (or “Quakers”) arrived. Although persecuted at the time, several of the Pilgrim families (including John Howland’s two brothers Arthur and Henry) were soon attending Friends Meetings. This would be the faith of our ancestors for centuries, and such names Gardner and Heaton, as well as Burgess, are renowned for their contributions to the Society of Friends. The last true Friend in our family was my grandmother Dorothy Burgess, who remained a faithful member of the Friends Meeting in Poughkeepsie, New York all her life.

As already stated, John Howland would marry another *Mayflower* passenger Elizabeth Tilley, (who was born about 1604 in Scroobay, Nottingham, England) on August 4, 1623. Her father (John Tilley) and her step-mother (Bridget Van der Velde Tilley, of “whom nothing is known, except that she was of Holland, and that

⁶ Ames, Azel. *The May-flower and Her Log, July 15, 1620 - May 6, 1621, 1901.*

she had, apparently, no child.”⁷) both came over on the *Mayflower*, but died during that first winter of 1620-1621. John and Elizabeth would have several children together. There are eight children listed in Mackenzie’s *Colonial Families*, but the more detailed list compiled by Hubert Kinney Shaw (which is probably more reliable) lists ten children.⁸ They were:

- John, born February 24, 1626; died after May 6, 1693.
- Desire, born before May 22, 1627; died October 13, 1683.
- Jabez, born about 1644; died before February 21, 1711/12.
- Joseph, birthdate is unknown; died January 1703/04.
- Isaac, born about 1649; died March 9, 1723.
- Hope, birthdate is unknown; died January 8, 1683.
- Elizabeth, birthdate unknown; died 1683.
- Lydia, birthdate unknown; died after January 11, 1710/11.
- Hannah, birthdate unknown; deathdate unknown.
- Ruth, birthdate unknown; died before October 1679.

The child that interests us is their first daughter (second child) Desire. She married Captain John Gorham (born circa 1620) on November 6, 1643/44. John Gorham (son of Ralph Gorham) was born in England, and baptized at Bennefield on January 28, 1620/21 before coming to America. He lived in Plymouth before moving north to Marshfield, Massachusetts in 1646, and then to

⁷ Ames, Azel. *The May-flower and Her Log, July 15, 1620 - May 6, 1621*, 1901, pgs 183-184.

⁸ *Families of the Pilgrims - John Howland*, compiled by Hubert Kinney Shaw. Published by the Massachusetts Society of Mayflower Descendants, 1955.

Yarmouth, Massachusetts (on Cape Cod) and then west to settle near the Barnstable, Massachusetts line in 1652. A few years later he moved to Barnstable proper, where he owned a large tract of property which included a grist mill and tannery. Records indicate that he was one of the selectmen of Barnstable in 1674.

In 1673 he was appointed lieutenant of the Plymouth forces in the Dutch war. He commanded a company during King Philip's war (1675-1676) that fought in the famous Narragansett "swamp fight" on December 19, 1675. Fatigue and exposure after the battle combined to weaken him, and he would die of a fever in early February of 1676. He was buried at Swansea (northwest of Somerset, Massachusetts) on February 5, 1676. His wife Desire would die on October 13, 1683 and would be buried in Barnstable on Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

A memorandum book of Captain Gorham, written in 1645, contains this account of his family: "Louisburg, Feb., 27, 1645-46. The rise of ye family of Gorhams taken from Capt. George Gorham. My Great Great Grandfather & family came out of Some part of England and lived at Marshfield and Had one son named after him,

John Gorurn alis Gorham, which son after Having Married With a Howland and had Sevrall Children Went home to England and Returned Soone again to his family. His Father Lived and Dyed att Marshfield and whats remarkable He Was a Joyner and Made his Coffen himself for sevrall years before be Dyed and Used to Keep apples in It as a chest Untill he dyed & used it. The son John married Desire Howland and went to England moved from Marshfield to Barnstable Built mills-tan vatts &c.”⁹

Captain John and Desire (Howland) Gorham would have eleven children. Their fifth child (second son) would also be named John. He was born on February 20, 1651 at Marshfield, Massachusetts. On February 24, 1674 he would marry Mary Otis (born March 14, 1652/3). He would pass away on November 11, 1716 - but not before his son Stephen (sometimes spelled “Siephen”) Gorham was born in 1683. Stephen would marry Elizabeth Eliza Gardner (daughter of James Gardner and Mary Starbuck) on Christmas Day (December 25) 1703. It is not known

⁹ Most of the information about Capt. John Gorham (including the quote from his memorandum book) comes from the following web page consulted in October of 2008: <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nyterry/gorham/gorham.html>.

when Stephen died, but Elizabeth would pass away on July 22, 1763.

Stephen and Elizabeth (Gardner) Gorham would have a son named Josiah Gorham on June 9, 1723. He would marry Deborah Lovell (daughter of James Lovell and Abigail Gorham who was born on November 13, 1730) in 1752 or 1753 at Barnstable. Josiah Gorham would die in September of 1803. It is not known when Deborah passed away.

Josiah and Deborah Gorham would have a son named James, who was born on November 19, 1754. He married Parnal Gardner (daughter of Solomon Gardner Jr. and Mary Pollard who was born on February 2, 1761 and died on March 9, 1804) around 1781. He would die in 1793.

James and Parnal Gorham would have a daughter named Mary Gorham, who was born on August 27 or 29, 1784. She would marry Prince Gardner (born October 6, 1782 and died on April 4, 1851), son of Prince Gardner¹⁰ (September 21, 1742 - April 19,

¹⁰ The older Prince Gardner (born in 1742) was the son of Robert Gardner and Jedidah Folger. They were married on January 16, 1730.

1816) and Deborah Barnard (who passed in September of 1806) of Nantucket. Mary would die on January 6, 1875.

Prince and Mary Gardner would have a daughter named Eliza (sometimes listed as “Elisa”, and once as “Elizabeth”), who was born on Nantucket Island on January 13, 1816. We are extremely lucky in that sometime around 1895 Eliza would write a work she entitled *Reminiscences Of My Married Life, With Some Incidents Preceding, For the Children*. A copy of this wonderful resource of family history, full of anecdotes about life a century ago is in my possession, thanks to my uncle Willard Moore, who sent me a copy in 1993. It is Eliza who records that during the Civil War, “Wm. Burgess had been drafted, and was confined with 2 others for refusing to serve”.¹¹

Eliza would marry Daniel L. (sometimes his middle initial is listed as “P”) Heaton who was born in 1815. They would have a daughter in 1843 named Mary Heaton. (I have not been able to discover when Eliza passed away, but a note written in my grandmother’s (Dorothy A. Burgess) hand says “Eliza Gardner

¹¹ Heaton, Eliza. *Reminiscences Of My Married Life*, pg 20.

Heaton is buried in the rural cemetery near Centerville, NY.”

Daniel might have passed in 1893.)

Mary Heaton (who was born on May 22, 1843) would marry Thomas H. Burgess (who was born on July 17, 1833) on October 22, 1863.¹² Our family tradition states that Thomas was born in Ulster County, New York. But the 1870 U.S. Census records list one “Thomas M. Burgess”, a 36 year old farmer living in Lloyd in Ulster County, New York (with a 26 year old wife named Mary and a new born son named Frederick) as having been born in Ohio. This may explain why I have been unable to locate many records of the Burgess family line prior to the birth of Thomas Burgess.

Thomas and Mary Burgess would have a son named Frederick on March 11, 1870. (Frederick was my great-grandfather.) On August 1, 1900 he would marry Flora May Palmer (March 18, 1879 - January 20, 1958) in Milton, New York. They lived at Todd Hill Farms - a fruit farm in Bushwick Road for many years. Frederick would pass away on August 11, 1949.

¹² The info in the section beginning with the descendants of John and Desire (Howland) Gorham comes largely family sources confirmed with info from the on-line *Barney Genealogical Record*. “Eliza Starbuck Barney's journal is the most reliable genealogy for Nantucket's families for the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. The Barney Record contains vital information on more than 40,000 Nantucketers.”

Willard Moore (Frederick and Flora Burgess's grandson) would recall Todd Hill Farms: "It ... remains today a striking, two-story Victorian style house with a barn and other out buildings. The windows were narrow and gracefully trimmed in fancy molding. The centrally located front double doors offered entry from the front porch. The house was partially surrounded by giant maple trees and from the porch, one could enjoy a sweeping view of the front gardens and the woods beyond the road.

"A shed-roofed kitchen was attached to the back of the house and a root cellar was located under this kitchen and accessible through an outside storm door. The 'English' style barn housed hay for the horse and was mainly a work place for sorting and crating fruits and vegetables.

"The house had no running water, though a small hand pump in the kitchen brought in water from the well. A two-hole privy was located behind the woodshed, about 25 yards north of the house. A lovely, bountiful Concord grape arbor provided a corridor from the back yard to the outhouse."¹³

¹³ Moore, Willard. *A Personal Memoir of My Father*, 1993.

In October of 1993, Willard Moore (my uncle), my father Robert Moore and I visited Todd Hill Farms, and found that some of the old fruit trees are still producing. The current occupants were endeavoring to return the house to its original layout, and were grateful to have the opportunity to ask Willard several questions. Before I left, I picked up a leaf from the ground and have kept it safely pressed as a memento.

On November 4, 1902, Frederick and Flora would have a daughter - my grandmother Dorothy Alberta Burgess. (They would also have a son, Kenneth Thomas Burgess who was born near Milton on March 22, 1905.) She attended Highland schools, and was a graduate of what was then known as the New Paltz Normal School (now SUNY New Paltz) in 1922. She would marry Harry Eugene Moore (born October 23, 1896) on December 27, 1930. She would teach at the Arlington Junior High School and in the Pawling Central School District for 44 years, retiring in 1966. For eighteen years, she served on the Board of the Vassar-Warner Home. She died suddenly in Poughkeepsie, New York, where she had lived for 66 years on May 23, 1988. At the time, she was

preparing to sell their home in Poughkeepsie and move with her second husband, Willard Carroll, to a retirement community. She was buried at Lloyd Cemetery in Highland, New York, where many of her ancestors are interred.

One of the things I remember most about my Grandma Dorothy was that she was not the most successful cook. When we would go to visit her and Bill Carroll (who used to hang an old tire in a tree in the backyard for us to swing in), we would often either pick up *Kentucky Fried Chicken*, or go to eat at the *Ground Round* - although Willard Carroll always preferred *Denny's*. I remember one time when Grandma made me a grilled cheese sandwich. But I had trouble eating it. She had neglected to take the cheese out of the plastic wrapper before she grilled it. I also recall the time she poured the onion soup mix into the Jell-O instead of the meat-loaf. It's funny the things you remember years later.

One of my final memories of being in Grandma Dorothy's house was watching the first game of the 1988 World Series. At the time, we were cleaning out the house on Wilbur Boulevard after her passing, and a young woman I was dating at the time, Jamie

Kleinkauf, was going to college at SUNY New Paltz. On the evening of October 15, my mom (who had come to New Paltz for a sorority reunion) and I (who had come to visit Jamie) were spending the night at Wilbur Boulevard and it was in their old living room that I saw Kirk Gibson hit his famous walk-off homerun in game one of the World Series. Being a huge Dodger fan, this was a thrilling moment. And I am so glad that this is the last memory I have of being in the Carroll home.

Harry E. Moore and Dorothy had two sons: Willard Burgess Moore, who was born on September 1, 1931, and Robert Douglas Moore (my father), who was born on July 28, 1940. (Their families are detailed in my *Brief History of the Moore Family*.)

After Harry Moore's passing on October 8, 1958 Dorothy Moore would marry longtime friend Willard H. Carroll on December 28, 1963. Willard was born on January 22, 1899 in Poughkeepsie to William and Anna (Ferguson) Carroll. His first wife, Ruth (Taber) Carroll, had died in early 1963. He was a World War I veteran, serving in the cavalry back when that meant riding on horses. He was a Mason for over 60 years. "Grandpa Bill" was

one of the finest Christian men that I have ever known. I have tried hard to live up to his example. (My most precious possession is his wedding ring that I now wear.) He passed away on October 4, 1993 in Guilford, Connecticut at the age of 94 and is buried at the Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery. At the time of his passing, he was the oldest living member of the Triune Obed Masonic Lodge No. 782 in Poughkeepsie, New York. He was very proud of this.

One thing that Grandpa Bill said that has always stayed with me (Besides his habit of saying “I have had sufficient” when he was done eating.) is that when he went to church, he liked to hear a message that gave him something to think about during the rest of the week. I have always remembered this each time I have sat down to prepare my own sermons. Every sermon I have written in the past twelve years has been prepared with his words in mind.

As a companion to the revised version of my “Brief History of the Moore Family”, I wrote this first version of “A Brief History of the Burgess Family”. I hope it is clear and conscience. Please let me know (danmoore@minister.com) if there are any errors or information that should be included in a revised version in the future.

*Peace and Joy!
Daniel J. Moore
November 2008*